

MA THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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PRESS RELEASE

TEXTILES IN DAILY LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES
January 22 - March 17, 1985

Textiles in Daily Life in the Middle Ages, an exhibition opening at The Cleveland Museum of Art January 22 and running through March 17, presents some of the Museum's most beautiful and important European textiles. It includes a small but choice group of silks, velvets, brocades, tapestries, and embroideries dating from the end of the 11th century to the late 15th century and places them within a broad context of medieval art and life. Because even these select textiles cannot tell the full story, sculptures, panel paintings, and manuscript illuminations are exhibited with them.

Rebecca Martin of the Department of Art History and Education has organized the textiles into two groups as they served either ecclesiastical or secular uses. Vibrantly colored fabrics, many embroidered or woven with gold and silver threads, give material witness to the fervor of medieval religious faith. An embroidered medallion depicting the coronation of the Virgin is particularly representative of religious works in the exhibition. Virtually every surface is embellished with lavishly decorated textiles—a cloth of honor held by angels as a backdrop, the floor covering, bench cushion, victory banner, and garments of angels and saints.

In the secular world, luxurious textiles were a mark of position and privilege. A manuscript painting showing a royal lady at ease with her female attendants in her private quarters illustrates fabrics typically used at court in curtains, carpets, floor pillows, bed coverings, and clothing. The exhibition includes textiles once part of furnishings such as these, as well as textiles replicated by medieval sculptors and artisans on three-dimensional objects.

Rebecca Martin will speak about the exhibition in a series of three lectures Wednesdays at 2:15 pm February 6, 13, and 20 and will give gallery talks January 23 and 27 at 1:30 pm. An illustrated catalogue accompanies the exhibition.